

BOYLE UNION.



RETURN to an Order of the Honourable The House of Commons,
dated 29 May 1848—*for*,

COPY "of CORRESPONDENCE between the Poor-law Commissioners and
the Guardians of the Boyle Union, previous to their Dismissal."

Poor-law Commission Office, }
Dublin, 9 June 1848.

W. STANLEY.
Secretary.

Ordered, by The House of Commons, to be Printed, 3 July 1848.

CAPTAIN WYNNE TO THE COMMISSIONERS.

Sir,

Carriick-on-Shannon, 13 April 1848.

I HAVE the honour to state, for the information of the Commissioners, that in compliance with their request, contained in your letter of the 6th instant, No. 18620/48, I proceeded on Tuesday the 11th instant to Gorteen, being the most convenient place to hold the investigation into the cases of death from starvation specified in the letter of the Rev. J. Henery to his Excellency the Lord Lieutenant.

On receipt of your letter I put myself in communication with Mr. Henery, as also with the Board of Guardians of the Boyle Union, requesting of the former that he would furnish me with the names of such parties as were able to depose to the facts stated in his letter, as also that he would be present on the occasion; and of the Board of Guardians to depute some member or members to attend to give such explanation as their books and knowledge of the facts might enable them to afford.

I received the names required from the Rev. Mr. Henery, and summoned the parties, who were accordingly in attendance on Tuesday, the earliest day on which it was possible to complete my arrangements: the Rev. Mr. Henery, Joseph M'Donnell, Esq. of Doo Castle, Rev. Mr. Brennan, P.P., Rev. Mr. Brown, P.P., Mr. Stanley, late guardian, &c. &c.; and on the part of the Board of Guardians, Mr. Holmes of Clogher.

I forward you the evidence of each witness, as I took it down, and shall make such remarks in explanation thereof as the character and station of the witnesses will render necessary to lead the Commissioners to a true conclusion.

I shall take the cases *seriatim*, and would premise that the greatest possible exertion was made, not only to get up a case against the Board of Guardians, but also to prove that the poor law was inadequate to meet the distress that at present exists in the union, and thereby to establish a claim to part of a sum of 3,000,000 *l.*, which they stated had been promised by Lord John Russell last year.

It is a fact more curious than uncommon, that those persons most clamorous and apparently most zealous in the cause of the suffering poor, were, without exception, defaulters in their rates; no individual present, with the exception of Mr. Holmes, having paid up the last rate, and some owing to the two last.

All expressed themselves most anxious for an extension of relief; but not at the expense of the union.

Case of *Anne Kilkenny*.—John Kilkenny showed a remarkably strong animus, and contradicted himself several times; was a disappointed applicant for outdoor relief, being able-bodied.

Mr. Stanley exhibited very strong feeling against the Board, of which he was a member until the 25th ultimo.

The other witnesses in this case appeared to give their evidence fairly and impartially.

I am of opinion that this is one of those cases where aversion to enter the workhouse has proved fatal; the deceased may have died from want of medical or other assistance in her confinement, or from exhaustion or want of strength. I could not elicit the fact of the child being born dead; I am of opinion it was. It appeared strange, when considerable anxiety was evinced to prove the case, that none of the children who were in the house at the time were present to depose to this and other facts. It is to be regretted that out-door relief was not given in this case, as it appears to have been one peculiarly suitable.

The relieving officer does not appear to have acted with that promptitude so indispensable where so great an amount of destitution of the most urgent description exists as in the electoral divisions of Kilsalvy and Kilturra in the Boyle Union; he however throws the blame on the guardians, as will be seen by his evidence.

I do not see any reason to doubt the fact that Honoria Kilkenny, the daughter, died of want, and that the remaining children are also likely not to recover. I have strongly recommended a far higher standard of relief in the quantity of food given, and an extension, on a considerable scale, of the number of recipients. It should, however, be remembered, that by leaving the workhouse, this unhappy family brought upon themselves their sufferings.

I do not think, in the case of Mary Connelly, death can be said to have been caused by starvation; exposure to the inclemency of the weather while in a state of disease and exhaustion, induced probably by want of food or had food, was sufficient to produce death, and I have no doubt did. Nobody appears to blame but the poor creature herself for having left the workhouse.

Philip McGowen's Wife and Child.—In the cases of Philip McGowen's wife and child, the details of the husband's evidence were most heartrending. Here again we find pestilence and famine so mixed up that it is almost impossible to say which was the cause of death.

I think it probable that in this case fever, induced by bad or insufficient food, was the immediate cause of death. The workhouse appears to have been offered more than once, and refused.

Bryan Flanagan.—In the case of Bryan Flanagan I cannot see that blame is fairly attributable to anybody, nor does it appear that he died of starvation.

Widow Doney's Daughter.—From the mother's evidence there appears too much reason to believe that her daughter died of want of food; indeed, the mother is more than half dead, and can scarcely recover with the greatest care. As in the other cases, aversion to enter the workhouse appears again to have been fatal. It was certainly a case for out-door relief, but none was given in the union till after the 25th of February.

Andy Davey.—This is a strange case. There is no doubt but that this man died of want of food; at the same time, there is no doubt he possessed the means of relief, from the fact of his having two head of cattle, one of which was sold for his burial. He also refused the workhouse.

James Gallagher.—I am of opinion this poor man's case should have been an exception, and that he should have been admitted provisionally, if his state of health rendered him unfit to return home without risk of his life; such is the practice I invariably recommend.

John May and Son.—I am of opinion that the application stated to have been made during the illness of the parents was made by the eldest girl, and should have been promptly attended to by the relieving officer, which appears not to have been the case; it was a case for immediate provisional relief. The relieving officer, in excuse, pleads the restrictions placed upon him by the guardians in confining him to relief in the house in cases requiring out-door relief; and gives, as proof, the cases of the Widow Lang, represented on the 11th of March, as destitute and in fever, yet received no out-door relief till the 25th, when she was ruled by the guardians for five pounds of meal per week for self and five children. Mr. Holmes, the representative of the Board of Guardians present, stated that this rule was a mistake as entered in the book, that the five pounds of meal were intended as provisional relief till such time as the parties could come into the house; but then it was a case for out-door relief,

relief, and out-door relief was being given at the time in the Union. I am of opinion that there are some reasons to doubt these parties having died of starvation. It is difficult to suppose that John May's father, who is represented in evidence as being a humane and kind-hearted man, should have allowed his son and grandchild to die of starvation, at a time when he had a quantity of meal stored in his house, and was in other respects in wealthy circumstances. It appears also that deceased received aid from his priest, from a fund which has been furnished by Rome for the relief of the Irish poor; it appears however that the aid was on a small scale. It is clear that deceased and his wife laboured under dysentery for five or six weeks, almost in the same house with his father, a comfortable man, with meal stored in his house; and from all the circumstances of the case, I do not think the deaths can be attributed to want of food, but rather to dysentery, brought on perhaps originally from insufficient or bad food. With regard to the evidence of Mr. Stanley in this case, I shall only observe, that it appeared he had only attended the Board in Boyle once in three months, 17th of March; and foreseeing the improbability of his being re-elected on the 25th, not having paid his rates, he ruled in favour of out-door relief to all the parties in the relieving officer's book for his (Kilshalvy)* electoral division, many of which the chairman overruled, which has led no doubt to the bad feeling which appears to exist at present between the parties.

Case of Pat Marra.—The relieving officer, from his own evidence, which in point of fact was the only evidence in this case, did his duty. I think on the 25th of February deceased's case was one for out-door relief. It is difficult to form an opinion as to the immediate cause of death, as the evidence was not at all conclusive.

Widow Carbery's case.—The relieving officer appears to have neglected this case; I have no doubt but that application was made to him, as stated by Honora McGowan, and should have been promptly attended to. Deceased was old and declining for some time previous to her death. I do not think the facts elicited in evidence would warrant the conclusion that she died of starvation.

Case of John Healy's two Children.—The relieving officer appears to have neglected this case also. It appears to have been a particularly urgent one, and should have been promptly relieved the moment the surrender of the land rendered the claimant eligible, or before, if, as was the case, that the relieving officer was ignorant of the fact of his holding land. There is too much reason to believe that these poor children died of absolute want.

It may not be out place to state here, for the information of the Commissioners, the state in which I found the district, particularly the electoral divisions of Kilshalvy and Kilturra, as also the prospects of the increase or diminution of the destitution which exists there at present.

I regret to say I found matters much worse than I expected, or than they were when I last visited the district. An alarming amount of the most urgent destitution appears to exist in the electoral divisions of Kilshalvy and Kilturra, I think mainly attributable to the non-attendance at the Board of the Guardians of those divisions, to whom, by the rules of the Board, the care of that district was entrusted. Relief has not been given to the extent which the circumstances of those very poor divisions required, and consequently they have lost ground, and will now require a large increase. The population appears to have run down rapidly.

Very little employment has been given in these divisions, at the same time extraordinary exertions are being made in these and other divisions in the Boyle Union to put down the potato crop; a large quantity has been already sown, and preparations are being made for at least an average crop; seed is very plenty and cheap, being in abundance at from 3s. 6d. to 3s. 10d. per cwt. in the Ballybaderen market. Scarcely any white crops sown as yet.

No employment under the Land Improvement Act has yet been undertaken, or rather commenced, except in the electoral division of Kilfree, where it has been suspended in consequence of the terms on which it was given, and under which the employed found they could not get on.

The first condition of employment was having paid the last May rent; the second,

* N.B.—This will appear from inspection of Application and Report Book of Relieving Officer for Kilshalvy.

second, that the employed should leave one-half his wages in liquidation of the November rent, receiving the other half in meal. This was found not to answer, and the work is suspended.

In conclusion, I beg to say that I was unable sooner to forward this report, consistent with the care and circumspection which were necessary in an investigation which has excited deep interest in the union; the examination of witnesses taking up two whole days.

ENCLOSURES in foregoing REPORT.

EVIDENCE taken on OATH, at an Investigation held at *Gortree*, in the BOYLE UNION, on the 11th and 12th days of April 1848, into the Cause or Causes of the Death of the Persons named in the Letter of the Rev. Mr. *Heary*, P. P., to his Excellency the Lord Lieutenant, dated April 5th instant.

CASE I.

Mrs. Kilkenny and Child, who died after several Applications for Relief.

John Kilkenny being duly sworn.—Knew the deceased; was brother-in-law to her; remembers her death; it was on or about the 20th March last; believes she had no bodily disease, and stated that she left her death on the relieving officer; was confined the morning of her death; on the day before was unainted, on Sunday, and died on Tuesday following. Witness applied to the relieving officer the day his sister-in-law was unainted, for relief for her; was told by that officer that he was so controlled by the chairman of the Board of Guardians, Mr. *Phibbs*, that he could not give her any relief; stated at the time that if the woman was not relieved at once she would die. Deceased told witness when last he saw her that she was sick and weak from hunger; deceased had no medical attendant or midwife at her confinement; nobody in the house with her but her children.

Mr. *Stanley*, Poor-law Guardian up to 25th ultimo, duly sworn.—Knew deceased; applied on her behalf at the Board on the 17th of March last; when attending at Boyle represented the case as extremely urgent and requiring prompt attention; the chairman refused on the grounds that she had previously left the workhouse at her own request; does not think the deceased laboured under any organic disease; was greatly exhausted from want of food; stated that if not promptly relieved the woman would certainly die, as she was unable to come into the workhouse; the chairman stated that he could not help it. Many other cases ruled by me in my division were overruled by the chairman; of these the greater proportion were widows and orphans. Witness's attention directed by Mr. *Holmes* to the cases in the relieving officer's book, as ruled by him, witness, and overruled by chairman.

Bryan Dacey, an Infirm Man, unable to Work.

Thomas Traff.—Witness cannot speak as to this man; at the time he ruled in favour of out-door relief for Traff, did not perceive that relieving officer reported him as able-bodied.

N. B.—Traff was placed by relieving officer under the head of able-bodied.

John McKee, Sick these five Years, to his Knowledge.

Bernard Cunningham, Porter of the Boyle Workhouse, duly sworn.—Remembers Anne Kilkenny, deceased; entered the workhouse on the 22d February, and left of her own accord on the 26th of same month.

John McManamy, Relieving Officer of Keshnaly and Kiltarna Electoral Divisions, Boyle Union, duly sworn.—Recollects Anne Kilkenny, deceased; received her application on Mr. *Stanley*'s recommendation on the 14th of February last; gave her a ticket for the workhouse, as there was no out-door relief at the time. Deceased appeared at this period in good health, but her child appeared to suffer from want; deceased went to the workhouse on the 22d, and left it in a few days after. Another application was made on behalf of deceased on the 17th of March by Mr. *Stanley* and somebody else, who witness forgets; but does not recollect the first witness, Kilkenny, making any application except for himself. Represented the case again on the 17th of March to the Board, but was refused, on the grounds that she had left the house of her own accord; was ordered to offer her the workhouse again; did not do so, but intended to do so the earliest opportunity. Deceased died on or about the 20th.

Examined in reference to Bryan Dacey's case, reported as able-bodied, on the 19th of January, in the relieving officer's book. Reported Bryan Dacey "able-bodied, and destitute from want of employment."

Applied

Applied on the 25th of February, on a report made the 15th of January. Cannot say I made any explanation to the guardians in reference to the change that had taken place in him during the interval between 15th of January and 25th of February; saw him repeatedly during that time.

My orders are, to supply means of conveyance to such persons as are unable to travel to the workhouse from illness or other cause. Have always, when possible, done so; in some instances I was unable to procure carts.

Philip O'Beira, duly sworn.—Knew deceased. In January she was in a low state from want of food; in February worse, and in March still worse; died about the 20th of March.

CASE II.

Case of Honoria Kilkenny, aged Eight Years, stated to have died of Starvation.

John Kilkenny, duly sworn.—Knew Honoria Kilkenny. She was eight years of age; had no complaint but want of food; died in the same house with her mother, four days after; is positive she died from starvation. Witness was an applicant for relief; received a ticket of admission, and attended on the 31st of March, and was sent home, as the house was full; would not go into the house if he was starving.

Mr. Stanley.—Knew Honoria Kilkenny. Is positive she died of want; thinks the five other children of Anne Kilkenny will also die on the allowances given them at present by the guardians, viz. 12 lbs. of meal per week.

Philip O'Beira.—Knew Honoria Kilkenny. Thinks she died of starvation; the children were in a bad state in January, scarcely able to walk. Five of them are now living on 12 lbs. per week, Indian meal, given by order of the guardians; their ages are four, ten, eleven, twelve, fourteen. Knows four children who get but 8 lbs. per week.

Case of Mary Connolly, deceased.

N.B.—Name erroneously given by Mr. Henry, in his letter to the Lord Lieutenant.

Philip McGowan, duly sworn.—Never knew deceased; knows her father; does not know anything of her circumstances previous to her death, nor of her death; knows nothing of the matter.

Biddy McKee.—Knew the deceased; her name was Minny, not Mary, as stated; supposed her to be a sound girl till the badship came on the country; was some time in the workhouse; three or four days after she left the workhouse she died; was all swelled and in a very bad state when she came home from the workhouse; her aunt refused to let her into the house, as she heard she had the sickness (fever) in the workhouse; lay by a clump of turf, and was found there dead; the neighbours said she had fever. Saw deceased after her return from the workhouse; she lay by a clump of turf; sent her meal, but she was unable to use it; it was Mr. Taylor, the miller, that sent her the meal.

Bernard Cavanagh, Porter of the Boyle Workhouse, sworn.—Remembers the family of deceased; it consisted of father, mother, and four children; entered the house on the 3d of March and left it on the 8th of same month; the family were all at the time in a delicate state. Witness remonstrated with them on the imprudence of leaving the house under the circumstances; there was room in the house at the time.

Case of Philip McGowan's Wife and Child.

Philip McGowan, duly sworn.—Was husband to Minny McGowan, deceased; deceased died on the 1st of March last; was sick for six weeks previous to her death with bowel complaint; lived on turnip tops and the roots of small turnips, which were not worth taking out of the ground; witness was unable to work or earn anything for his family since May last, in consequence of sickness; witness applied to relieving officer four weeks previous to his wife's death; was refused relief unless he brought a certificate signed by three ratepayers; witness found some difficulty in procuring the signatures required; was unable to do so till the 1st of March, on which day his wife died; witness then went to the relieving officer, who told him he could do nothing for him then, but directed him to follow him to the mail depot and he would see what he could do for him; witness went at once to the depot, but was told by the relieving officer that nothing could be done for him; relieving officer did not offer him the workhouse on this occasion; witness afterwards received an admission ticket from relieving officer, and went to the workhouse on the 31st of March; was not admitted on that day, and was told by the relieving officer to return home, that the house was full; got nine pounds of meal on the Monday following (3d April), for self and five children; lost five children previous to his wife's death; one three days before his daughter, who he, witness, positively swears died of starvation; would not go into the workhouse if he was dying.

John M'Manamy, Relieving Officer.—Philip McGowan applied on the 5th of February for the first time; was offered the workhouse, which he refused; applied again on the 8th of March, stating that his wife had died of fever, and that his children were then lying ill with some complaint; sent applicant to the dépôt, as stated by him in evidence; proceeded to the house of applicants, and found three of the children, who did not appear in fever; was told the others were out begging; witness offered a ticket to the workhouse, by the directions of the guardians, to whom witness stated the foregoing circumstances; gave applicant nine pounds of meal, as provisional relief, till room in the house could be obtained.

CASE of Bryan Flanagan, deceased.

John Andrews, duly sworn.—Knew Bryan Flanagan; he was a neighbour; was an idiot, but strong in constitution; heard of his death, which took place in Tubbercurry, not within the Boyle Union; deceased was a native of the union, but was a wanderer. Peter Flanagan applied for relief to the relieving officer on the 1st of February on behalf of his brother; cannot say that the idiot ever applied in person; relieving officer offered him the workhouse; believes there was no out-door relief in the union at the time.

Relieving Officer *Bryan Flanagan* was not in the union when his brother Peter applied on his behalf; deceased never made a personal application; witness inquired after deceased, but could not discover where he was.

CASE of the Widow Davey's Daughter.

Widow Davey, duly sworn.—Remembers the death of her daughter, Mary Davey; she died about Christmas; she was 23 years of age; had no complaint but hunger; witness applied for relief to the relieving officer; applied so often cannot recollect how often; held half an acre of land, which she gave up on or about Christmas last; got relief last night for the first time.

John Andrews sworn.—Knew deceased; the family were in extremely destitute circumstances; on my oath, I believe deceased died of starvation; I have not paid my rates.

John M'Manamy, Relieving Officer.—Received the widow Davey's application on the 3d of February; offered her the workhouse; she held three rods of land; from her extreme destitution, overlooked this obstacle; she would not go to the workhouse; she applied again 10 days ago, and on producing evidence of having given up the land, witness gave her relief, 5 lbs. of meal.

CASE of Andy Davey, deceased.

Nanny Davey.—Was wife to deceased; her husband died on the 22d of March; was a healthy man till the bad times; had no complaint but want till shortly before his death; thinks her husband applied for relief to relieving officer about a fortnight before his death; was ill herself at the time from hunger; gets at present 14 lbs. of meal in the week for self and five children; positive her husband died of starvation; the children will soon die.

John M'Manamy, Relieving Officer.—The first application made by the deceased's family was on the 21st of February; cannot say I visited on said application, but to the best of my belief I did; found on inquiry deceased had two heifers, did not see the heifers, but was told so; when deceased's case was brought before the guardians this remark was in my report for their guidance; was directed to offer the workhouse; am certain he had the heifers, as one was sold to bury him.

CASE of James Gallagher, deceased.

John M'Manamy, relieving officer, stated to the guardians, that James Gallagher could not find his family, who were begging about for themselves, and that he feared the man would be lost if not relieved. Note appended by the guardians: "Cannot be admitted without his family." Died, as stated, on his way home, on the road side.

CASE of John May and Son, deceased.

Margaret Kilsny, duly sworn.—Was wife to John May, deceased; deceased died on the 7th of March last; had dysentery for five weeks before his death. Witness laboured under the same complaint for the same period, and at the same time; is sure it was caused by want of food; their only support during this time was what her child was able to procure by begging. She lost a daughter, not a son, as stated; she was eight years old, and had no complaint but hunger. Had four children, aged thirteen, ten, eight, four. Applied, by the eldest girl, about a week or fortnight before her husband's death; was unable to go herself;

herself; but sent five times to the relieving officer, who did not visit her house till the 3d of March. Never received any relief; was promised it here last night. Our little girl was told by the relieving officer that he could not give her anything, but wrote down something in his book; never received any assistance from her father-in-law, who lived at the end of her house, and had meat stored there; he was a kind man, but the other sons would not allow him to give anything.

Havaria McGowan, duly sworn.—Recollects the death of John May; heard he had a sketch of fever, but not a taking one; means not any fever, but the effects of hunger; he was in the workhouse, and only returned a few days when he took to his bed, and the neighbours shunned him for fear of the disorder; had nothing to support him but the produce of the children's begging; witness went with the little girl to the relieving officer when she applied for relief; relieving officer told her he had none for her. This was on Thursday, and deceased died on Sunday following. Relieving officer gave Widow Beira, of Kilturra, meat on the day he refused the little girl. John May's father died a week after the son, and the daughter three days after her father; the neighbours said it was of fever they died; the father of John May was in good circumstances; bore a good character; was kind and humane.

The Rev. Mr. *Henery*, duly sworn.—Believes the deceased John May died of starvation; that starvation may not have been the immediate cause of his death; that he has been long delicate and confined by reason of want of food; is of opinion that he had not fever; was angry with him for leaving the workhouse; witness gave him some assistance, but for which he believes he would have died long before he did; this assistance was not sufficient for the support of his family.

Mark McDonagh, duly sworn.—Visited the house of John May, deceased, in company with the relieving officer; deceased complained of a bad cold, and had a very bad colour; cannot say the exact time, but thinks it was in February; heard deceased died of fever; heard that the father also died of fever; heard that the father was not kind to the son, in giving him any assistance.

John McManus, Relieving Officer.—The deceased applied for relief to witness on the 7th of January; at that time witness reported him "able-bodied, but destitute for want of employment;" did not see his family, who were out begging. Witness offered deceased the workhouse; did not know deceased and family had been there before; the daughter of deceased may have made subsequent applications, but he, witness, cannot recollect any such; cannot recollect receiving a note from the Rev. Mr. Henery on the subject, but might have done so. Witness is in the habit of visiting any parties whom he believes to be in distress without an application; has orders to that effect from the guardians; does not recollect any application being made to him on behalf of deceased on or about the 3d of March last; cannot say of what deceased died, or of what his daughter died; never heard that the grandfather did not assist his son; attributes blame to the guardians in placing restrictions on him in the administration of relief; never made any remonstrance to them on the subject; never represented the possible consequences of this restriction, except indirectly; can instance the case of the Widow Lang on the 27th of March, at which time represented her destitute and in fever. Refused to get five pounds of meat per week, which is not sufficient to keep her and five children alive. Paddy McKew, represented as a fit object for out-door relief, and unable to go to the workhouse, was overruled by the chairman of the Board of Guardians.

Mr. *Stanley*, Poor-law Guardian, up to the 25th ult.—Visited the Board at Boyle on the 17th of March last; proceeded to rule the books of his electoral division, Kiltulavy; but was told by the chairman and Mr. Holmes, that he was acting a very bad example in putting so many persons' names on the list. There were present also Mr. Fry, Mr. Frazar, and himself; declared he would not attend again while business was so carried on.

Question by Mr. *Holmes*, Guardian.—Have not paid the last poor rate; am not now a guardian; never heard that a defaulter was ineligible; was a candidate, but has not as yet heard from the clerk on the subject of the election; at the meeting of the 17th witness disapproved of raising the salary of three of the officers on the same day that relief was refused to many parties.

CASE of *Patt Marren*, deceased.

James Gramers, duly sworn.—Knew deceased; knew him many years; he was a cripple and a wandering beggar, but a native of the union; died on the 27th of March last; to the best of witness's belief deceased died of starvation; never knew him to apply for relief.

John McManus, Relieving Officer.—Deceased applied on the 27th of January for relief, through his son, who applied at the same time on his own account; offered him the workhouse, which he refused; the father was not to be found at the time; met the father afterwards and offered him a ticket, as also the means of bringing him to Boyle as he could not walk.

Deceased made no subsequent application on the 25th of February; witness applied to the guardians for out-door relief for the deceased, stating at the time the circumstances
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of his case; application refused, and directed to offer him the work-house; cannot say that it was in consequence of this refusal that deceased died, but believes he died of starvation.

CASE of the Widow Carbery, deceased.

Henric McGuen, duly sworn.—Was acquainted with the Widow Carbery for ten years previous to her death, which occurred about a fortnight ago; deceased was about 60 years old, and had no support but what her daughter, who was a beggar, was able to give her; saw deceased a few days before her death; heard deceased say she was in a low state for want of food, and would not live long; she had no food but what her daughter could bring her, and the daughter was often unable to reach home at night, when the deceased had nothing; was with the daughter when she applied to the relieving officer for relief for herself and mother; was told that her name was not in his book, but that he would call; relieving officer never did call; deceased never received any relief; relieving officers promised to visit four other families in the same townland, but never did from that day to this; never visited the locality since January last.

John McManamy, Relieving Officer.—Never heard of this case till now; never received an application on behalf of deceased; do not recollect being asked to visit the locality referred to (Rathbun); have gone through the townland but did not visit the houses.

CASE of John O'Hara, deceased.

No witnesses.

CASE of John Healy's two Children.

John Meliase, duly sworn.—Knows Henry; his name is James; he deserted his wife in the hardship with her two children, two years and a half and four years old; both children died, one about a week ago, the other about a fortnight. Mrs. Healy had nothing but a few turnips, which grew on her own land, to support herself and children; had an acre of land, which she surrendered to her landlord, Mr. McDonnell, of Doo Castle, on the 23d of March. Witness has not the slightest doubt but that both the children died of starvation; the mother would have died also if not relieved by the Rev. Mr. Henery; the mother is unable to come here or leave her bed; some of the neighbours say she has fever; was a healthy woman till within the last six or seven weeks; heard her say she applied to the relieving officer about eight weeks ago; was unable to do so since from sickness; did not send any other person; never received any relief up to the present time.

Joseph McDonnell, of Doo Castle, Esq., J.P., duly sworn.—Knows James Healy. He deserted his wife several times; held land from him, about an acre; his wife surrendered it about a month or three weeks since; made application to the relieving officer by letter on her behalf; saw relieving officer in an hour afterwards in his office; cannot say if the woman received relief as yet.

John McManamy, Relieving Officer.—Knows Bridget Healy. Her husband has deserted her; received but one application from her, viz. on the 21st of February; might have received Mr. McDonnell's application, but cannot say positively. Offered her the work-house on the 21st of February; was not aware that she held land; does not think he visited her house; never gave her relief.

*Edward Byrne,
Temporary Poor-law Inspector.*

The Commissioners to the Clerk of the Guardians.

Poor Law Commission Office, Dublin,
20 April 1848.

Sir,

THE Commissioners for administering the laws for relief of the poor in Ireland have received Captain Wynne's report of the inquiry which he was instructed to make into certain alleged cases of death from starvation, specified in a letter addressed by the Rev. J. Henery to His Excellency the Lord Lieutenant.

The Commissioners derive from that report, and from the evidence accompanying it, a strong impression that in certain districts of the Boyle Union many persons, in an extreme and urgent state of destitution, have not been efficiently relieved by the Board of Guardians and their officers; and that in some cases death has been accelerated, if not occasioned altogether, by the absence of due relief.

The Commissioners transmit herewith a copy of the evidence taken in the inquiry,

inquiry, and they proceed to point out those parts of it which peculiarly affect the conduct of the Board of Guardians themselves, and of their relieving officer, John M'Manamy.

The evidence given in the case of Anne Kilkenny, and her daughter Honora Kilkenny, aged eight years, shows that the mother and her six children came into the Boyle workhouse on the 23d February, and left it on the 26th of the same month. On the 17th March the relieving officer states that he again brought her case before the Board, but that relief was refused, on the ground that she had left the house of her own accord, and that he was ordered to offer her the house again; that he did not do so, but intended to do so the earliest opportunity; and that she died on or about the 20th of March.

It appears further that this poor woman was confined in her own cabin the morning of her death, or the day before; that she received no relief or medical assistance whatever; and that nobody was with her in the house but her children.

A few days after her death it appears that her daughter Honora Kilkenny died in the same house, without any bodily disease or complaint, and from no other cause than want of food. After this event it appears that the Board of Guardians relieved the remaining five children with twelve pounds of meal weekly, and that the children were receiving this and no other relief at the time of the inquiry by Captain Wynne, and that these poor children were at that time likely to die in consequence of more efficient relief not having been afforded them, their respective ages being four, ten, eleven, twelve, and fourteen.

In the case of Philip M'Gowen and his family, it appears on the evidence that he first applied to the relieving officer for relief on the 5th February, and, as Philip M'Gowen states, was refused relief until he brought a certificate signed by three ratepayers. The relieving officer says that he offered him admission to the workhouse, which he refused. On the 1st March his wife died, one child having died three days previously, as Philip M'Gowen himself swore, of starvation. On the 8th March he again applied for relief, and the relieving officer brought the application before the guardians, who directed him again to offer the workhouse; and an admission ticket was furnished to Philip M'Gowen accordingly, with which he went to the workhouse on the 31st March, and was told by the relieving officer to return home, as the workhouse was full. On the 3d April following this applicant received nine pounds of meal for himself and five children; and the relieving officer describes this as provisional relief, until room in the workhouse could be obtained.

In the case of Mary Davey, the daughter of Widow Davey, it appears that she died about Christmas, at the age of 23 years, and, as her mother states, without any complaint but hunger. The mother appears to have been disqualified from receiving relief, as an occupier of half an acre or three roods of land, until Christmas last, when she says she gave it up. She says she made many applications to the relieving officer for relief, and the relieving officer states that he offered her the workhouse; he adds, that 10 days ago she applied again, and on producing evidence of having given up the land he gave her five pounds of meal, which, so far as the Commissioners are informed, is all the relief Widow Davey received up to the time of the inquiry. Of this poor person Captain Wynne reports, "The mother is more than half dead, and can scarcely recover with the greatest care."

In the case of Andy Davey (deceased), although it appears he possessed two heifers at the time of his death, his widow swears that he died of starvation, and that she was herself ill at the time from hunger. That part of this case which deserves especial attention is, that the widow and five children now receive only 14 pounds of meal per week, and she swears that in her belief her children will soon die.

In the case of James Gallagher (deceased), it appears that the relieving officer stated to the guardians that James Gallagher could not find his family, who were begging about for themselves, and that he feared the man would be lost if not relieved. A note appears to have been placed in the relieving officer's book by the guardians, to the effect, "Cannot be admitted without his family;" and the man having thus been refused all relief, died on the way home, by the road side.

In the case of John May and his child (both deceased), it appears that he died on the 7th March last, having had dysentery for five weeks previously;

and that one of four children, a girl aged eight years, died within a few days of the same time.

The Widow May states that she applied, by her eldest girl, to the relieving officer about a week or fortnight before her husband's death, and sent five times, but that he did not visit the house until the 3d of March. The relieving officer states that he recollects none of these applications; and in the course of his evidence on this case attributes blame to the guardians in placing restrictions on him in the administration of relief; he then instances the case of the Widow Lang, on the 27th March, at which time he represented her destitute and in fever, when it was decided that he should give her five pounds of meal per week, which he states was not sufficient to keep her and her five children alive. In explanation of this case, Mr. Holmes, a guardian, who was present at the inquiry, explained that the order as entered on the relieving officer's book was a mistake, and that the five pounds of meal was intended as provisional relief, until such time as the parties could come into the house. This widow's case being relievable out of the workhouse, and the workhouse being full, as the Commissioners infer, at the date of the order of the guardians, they are of opinion that proper provision should have been made for relief out of the workhouse in this case; and the explanation therefore of Widow Lang's case given by Mr. Holmes to Captain Wynne does not appear to the Commissioners to be satisfactory.

In the case of Widow Carbery (deceased), there appears to be no reason to doubt the evidence given by Honoria McGowen, that application was made to the relieving officer by the daughter of Widow Carbery previously to her death, for relief for her mother and herself. The relieving officer states that he recollects no such application, and admits that he never visited any of the houses in the townland in which the Widow Carbery lived.

In the case of John Healy's two children (both deceased), it appears that the father deserted them and their mother, and that both the children died within about a fortnight before the inquiry; and the evidence gives every reason to fear that they died from want. John Healy it appears held land to the extent of about an acre from Mr. McDonnell, of Doo Castle, which the wife surrendered on the 23d March; and Mr. McDonnell swears that he made application to the relieving officer by letter on her behalf, and saw him an hour afterwards, in his office. The poor woman appears to have been unable to apply for relief herself, from sickness.

The relieving officer admits he had an application from her on the 21st February, and that he then offered the workhouse; and that he might have received Mr. McDonnell's application, but cannot say positively. He was not aware, he states, that she held land, yet he does not think that he ever visited her house, and he states that he never gave her any relief.

The guardians will perceive, that in going through the evidence on these several cases, the Commissioners have dwelt on those parts alone which are unfavourable to the conduct of the guardians and their relieving officer. Their object in so doing is to apprise the guardians clearly of the strong necessity which exists for immediate explanation of their conduct as a Board, in reference to several of these deplorable cases; and also to give the relieving officer due warning of those parts of the evidence which chiefly impugn his character as a paid officer, subject to removal by the Commissioners.

On the receipt of such observations as the Board of Guardians may deem it proper to make on their own behalf, and of any explanation which the relieving officer may desire to submit on his own part, the Commissioners will be in a position to acquit themselves of the responsibility which rests upon them in regard to the future administration of relief to the destitute poor in Boyle Union.

By order, &c.
(signed) W. Stanley, Secretary.

EXTRACT from Minutes of Board of Guardians.

27 April 1848.

THE Board greatly regret and deeply deplore the melancholy occurrences detailed in Captain Wynne's Report, and trust there may never be a recurrence of them; but before the Commissioners form an opinion of the conduct of the guardians,

guardians, the Board earnestly request that they will take into consideration that these painful occurrences took place at the moment when the herculean labour of commencing the out-door relief came upon them, and at the period when the usual assizes business called away many of the Board; also from the acknowledged fact that M'Manamy, the relieving officer, had not had sufficient time to visit in person all the applicants; and when all the relieving officers were inexperienced, and most of them new to their districts, it was a difficult matter, seeing how necessary it is to guard against imposition, to select out of a whole population seeking for relief, such classes as were entitled to receive it under the Commissioners' order.

The electoral divisions of Kilsahvy and Kilturra sent but few inmates to the workhouse; Mr. Stauley, the guardian of the former division, rarely attended; in fact only four times during the last three years; the guardian for Kilturra has also absented himself, and the only *ex-officio* guardian resident in the district never appeared at the Board; consequently the information which the Board possessed did not warrant them in giving indiscriminate out-door relief. Caution was absolutely necessary in the first working of the system; and the Board distinctly affirm that no complaints were made to them of an insufficiency of food, and the relieving officers, whenever questioned, admitted that the persons relieved were satisfied; however, since the last visit of the Inspector, the allowance has been increased to seven pounds to adults and three pounds to children.

Though extreme and urgent destitution existed in several parts of the union, yet there has always been great reluctance to the workhouse test; several applicants for relief have refused to accept admission since the out-door relief commenced, and the Board should not be charged with want of humanity, or censured for deaths occurring outside the workhouse, where many individuals have voluntarily taken their discharge with nothing but starvation before them. If paupers thus leaving are immediately entitled to relief, the workhouse test, so much relied on, ceases to avail, and the whole property of the union would be inadequate to defray the cost that an indiscriminate system of relief would call for.

The Board, after an honest and diligent discharge of their duties for years past, feel assured that the Commissioners will not pass any censure upon them; but if blame is to fall on any one, let it be attached to those individual guardians who by their non-attendance have deprived the Board of the necessary information concerning their districts, which would have enabled the Board to lessen the calamities that they now so much lament.

The Board feeling that they have diligently and impartially fulfilled their arduous duties, and several members thereof having sacrificed their time, at great personal loss, in order to give the working of the law a fair trial, now request, if the Commissioners are dissatisfied with the manner in which their duties have been discharged, to be forthwith relieved, and another Board appointed, more humane, more efficient, and more painstaking than the present one.

The Commissioners to the Clerk of the Union.

Poor Law Commission Office,
Dublin, 4 May 1848.

Sir,

THE Commissioners for administering the laws for relief of the poor in Ireland have to acknowledge the resolution of the guardians of Boyle Union, of the 27th April last, passed in reply to the letter of the Commissioners of the 20th April.

The Commissioners feel assured of the sincerity of those expressions of regret in which the guardians have alluded to the melancholy occurrences detailed in Captain Wynne's Report; and they have observed with satisfaction some steps which have since been taken by the Board for the purpose of more effectually relieving the severe destitution which has been shown to prevail in some districts of the Boyle Union, and which has heretofore been met by most inadequate measures of relief.

The Commissioners do not doubt also that some individual members of the Board have been active and attentive in the discharge of their duties as guardians;

dians; but they are compelled by the evidence before them to conclude that the guardians, as a collective body, have made great default in this respect, and that by reason thereof the duties of the Board of Guardians have not been effectually performed, according to the intention of the Acts in force for the relief of the destitute poor in Ireland.

The chief grounds on which this opinion rests are detailed in the letter of the Commissioners of the 20th April, in which they pointed out to the Guardians those portions of the evidence forwarded by Captain Wynne which raised the most unfavourable impression of their conduct as a Board; but the Commissioners cannot avoid adverting to the remarkable fact, that although on the minutes of the 22d April directions are recorded to summon the guardians specially for the following Thursday, to take into consideration a matter reflecting so strongly on their character as a Board, only seven guardians of a body consisting of thirty-three appear by the minutes to have assembled on that day.

The Commissioners are much surprised by this apparent indifference on the part of the great majority of the guardians to the vindication of their character as a public body; and they feel bound at the same time to state, that the explanation of the conduct of the Board, placed on the minutes by the gentlemen assembled at that meeting, are not in their opinion satisfactory.

An order dissolving the Board of Guardians of Boyle Union is enclosed herewith, and the appointment of paid officers to act in execution of their duties will take place in due course.

By order, &c.
(signed) *W. Stanley*, Secretary.

BOYLE UNION.

COPY of CORRESPONDENCE between the
Parochial Commissioners and the Guardians of
the Boyle Union, previous to their Dissolution.

(*Mr. Grece.*)

Ordered, by The House of Commons, to be Printed,
3 July 1848.

456.

Under 2 oz.